CSREES Portfolio Review Expert Panel Report Summary

Portfolio 1.5.2 Animal Production
CY 1999 – 2003

SUMMARY

External Review Completed: March 2004

Portfolio Description

The Animal Production Portfolio is a major component of a broader Animal Systems portfolio that includes both the Animal Production and Animal Protection portfolios. The Animal Production Portfolio has been defined as the research, extension, and education programs aligned with the following eight knowledge areas related to the efficiency of animal productions systems:

- KA 301 reproduction
- KA 302 nutrition
- KAs 303 and 304 genetics
- KA 305 physiological processes
- KA 306 environmental stress
- KA 307 animal systems and management improved
- KA 308 products (pre-harvest)

The portfolio also includes new, emerging, and reemerging animal diseases, animal agricultural security and biosecurity, toxicology, and animal well-being. In describing and reporting on the performance of the portfolio, it is important to recognize that an integrated systems approach is utilized in planning, developing, and implementing programs.

Summary of Comments and Recommendations

In 2004 a panel comprised of independent experts from the field was convened to assess and score the current state of the Animal Production Portfolio. A discussion of specific comments and recommendations related to each of the dimensions of the three Office of Management and Budget (OMB) research and development (R&D) criteria used (relevance, quality, and performance) is provided below.

Relevance

The portfolio relevance, scope, and focus are very good. The team is to be commended for tracking and responding to emerging issues in the field. Integration of research, education and science is solid in overall coverage, but it is apparent that researchers and extension personnel are not communicating with one another as well as they should.

Quality

Overall, the content of this portfolio is of variable quality. The portfolio needs to focus on economic, sociological and global opportunities for producers (as stated in the USDA strategic plan) and move beyond the "cheap food" mindset. The team did an excellent job of working with stakeholders and the methodology shown for research is solid. However, the panel found voids in the methods used by extension and education.

Performance

Overall the portfolio shows great progress, but there is no real documentation of extension or teaching. Productivity in terms of research, such as scientific papers is strong; however, documentation of the transfer of information from laboratory to application is limited. In addition, productivity in terms of technology transfer is poor and needs to be improved. If technology transfer and other extension activities are taking place, there needs also to be a system in place to report on them.

General Comments

The Animal Production Portfolio shows evidence of outstanding work and accomplishments. It has dedicated NPLs who are involved with their stakeholders, who collaborate with other agencies, and who keep abreast of the current issues in their fields of science. CSREES publications are a great asset for explaining to the field, the agencies accomplishment and opportunities.

Comments on Future Directions presented by CSREES

The panel encourages the team to develop publications of their area to complement the material that resides on the CSREES website.

Data Issues

The panel rated performance primarily on the basis of personal experiences, not presented evidence. Lack of evidence, particularly for extension/technology transfer, shows the need for an improved, integrated reporting system to replace the current separate and inadequate, databases used for research, education, and extension. It may be necessary to revise CRIS and other databases to obtain the necessary evidence. The portfolio needs to address the issue of documentation and evidence and implement a better reporting system before the next review. Progress to integrate and automate the reporting system should allow for the retrieval of uniform, meaningful and quantifiable data, which will improve accountability within CSREES portfolios.

Evaluation Issues

There is a lack of identification of what measurable impacts are expected (e.g., intellectual property outputs, technology transfer), which is not just a deficiency in the reporting system. Each NPL should develop measurable outcomes and impacts by focusing on the application of science – the ends, not the means.

Portfolio Score

Portfolio 1.5.2 received a total score of 81 from the panel. This score places the portfolio in the category 'moderately effective in supporting CSREES objectives.'